

Combining Sentences to Make Paragraphs:

Paragraphs are groups of sentences that describe the same idea. A good paragraph includes the following: a topic sentence, detail sentences, proper order, and a consistent theme.

Topic Sentences

The *topic sentence* states the theme or main idea of a paragraph. It is usually the first sentence of a paragraph, but it can also be found at the end. A topic sentence is almost never found in the middle of a paragraph.

Detail Sentences

Detail sentences tell more about the main idea of the paragraph.

Order of Sentences

The *order of sentences* is important in writing good paragraphs. For example, if you wrote a paragraph explaining the four steps in flossing your teeth, you wouldn't start by writing, "Throw the used dental floss away." Order should always make sense.

Theme

The *theme*, or main idea, holds all the sentences in a paragraph together. It is stated in the topic sentence. Be sure all the detail sentences stick to the theme and tell about the main idea. Sentences that do not belong upset the sense or flow in the order of the sentences. The sentences that don't make sense are called non sequiturs, or ideas that "don't follow."

Story Maps: The Path of Fiction

Story maps or *plans* are outlines for fiction writers. You can "map" the main parts of stories or plays: setting, characters, major events, problems (challenges), and solutions. Story maps can be laid out in many different ways. Unlike outlines, you don't have to give the map a title or use Roman numerals. But, to be useful, the maps should include all the main parts of the story or play. These main parts should be organized around a plot, or action line.

Story Map

Setting
Characters:
Place:
Time:

Problem:

Events
Leading to
Resolution

▼

Rough Draft to Final Copy

Once you've prepared an outline or story map, you're ready to write the rough or first draft. The *rough draft* is also called *sloppy copy*. Rough drafts help you organize your ideas into sentences. They also help show how the different parts of your writing fit together. The rough draft is not the final copy. You may write several drafts before the final one. Don't worry about style and catchy phrases at this point. Instead, follow these basic steps:

1. Read over your outline, notes, or story map.
2. Follow your outline or map to write down in sentences the main points of the story.
3. Write down all your thoughts without stopping to check spelling or grammar, or to edit. Put in as much appropriate information as you can.
4. Read over your rough draft for obvious mistakes. Change sentences and paragraphs that do not follow logically. Mark corrections in grammar and punctuation.
5. Read over the rough draft for style. Consider how you might use some basic tools and techniques to add drama or interest to your writing. Fill in details in your paper, or add minor characters, dialogue, or extra episodes to your fiction.
6. Put the rough draft aside for a while and then read it over again. Is there anything you want to rewrite? Would you like to show it to a friend or family member? Have you made your points clear? Try reading your work aloud to see if it sounds right. Fine-tune your copy.
7. Prepare a final draft.

Reports

Reports are factual compositions. They describe the facts about anything – events, places, people, animals, plants, planets, stars, products, and more.

Writing a Report

1. Choose a topic
2. Gather a variety of resource and reference material. Be sure you can find enough information to use in your report. If you find too much information, narrow down the subject of your report.
3. Take notes. As you read through the reference and resource material, write down the most important information and interesting facts. Be sure to keep track on the information and its sources. You'll need this for the bibliography.
4. Write an outline. Put all the information and interesting facts from your notes into an organized framework.
5. Write a rough draft. Incorporate as much information as you can from the outline and notes. The introduction should tell the topic of your report. The body should include important information and interesting facts. The conclusion should summarize the main points from the body.
6. Revise your report. Be sure the information in each of the paragraphs belongs together. Check to see that one paragraph flows smoothly into the

Resolution:

Reviews:

Cross Between Essay and Report

Reviews combine ingredients of both essays and reports to give the facts - and then express an opinion.

Book Reports are one kind of review. When you write a book report, you summarized the main events of the story and describe the characters, setting, and plot. You can describe the things you like or dislike about the book, as long as you make it clear that you're stating your opinion.

Reviews are written every day about everything from cars to toys, movies to music. Look in your local newspaper. You'll probably find a review or two there

Bibliography

A bibliography shows where you got the information for a report. It is a list of articles, books, or other sources. Bibliographies are organized alphabetically by the author's last name or, when there is no author named, by the name of the publication. Then the title is listed, followed by the name of the publisher. The place and date of publication are listed at the end.

Anderson, Ariadne, Those Wily Foxes. School Books Press,
New Freedom, Virginia, 1995

Mehta, Suresh, "Fox Hunt: Foxes and Food," Natural Life Magazine.
Cheesboro, Vermont, March 1995

World Wonders Encyclopedia, Pine Mountain, Utah, 1992

Author

Book Title

Publisher

Pub Date

Publication Title

Article Title

Better Book Reports: A Seven-Step Plan

1. *Select a book that interests you. Look at the cover.* Then read the title and the description on the book cover. If the book still seems interesting, open it. Are there pictures? Read a paragraph or two. Are you still interested? If not, try another book.
2. *Read the book - all of it.*
3. *Take notes for the first draft of your book report.* Write down the title, author, and genre (novel, history, biography, and so on) on the book. Then note the names of the major characters and the setting. Next take notes on the main events, the problem (or conflict) in the book, and it's solution. Last, describe one or two favorite episodes from the book.
4. *Organize your notes and start your first draft.* Write down the title and author of the story. Then, write a one- to three-paragraph summary of the book. Don't retell every little detail or episode. Instead, limit your summary to the most important events in the story. Next, describe the problem or conflict in the story and how that problem is solved. This is especially

important in writing a book report on a novel or piece of fiction. Last, give your opinion of the story and why you feel the way you do.

5. *Read over the draft.* Try reading it aloud, and ask a friend or family member to read it, too. Note the parts that you want to revise.
6. *Edit your book report.* Reread your edited draft. Are you happy with it? Should you revise it even more, or are you satisfied with your work?
7. *When you're finished with your draft, write a neat, final copy of your book report.*

Fancy Thoughts: You may want to draw a picture of a scene from the book to include with the report. You might create an illustrated cover or choose to display your book report on a poster with several drawings. Perhaps you'd like to create a filmstrip about the book, one that includes your report and a series of illustrations for each part. Be creative!

Bibliography:

Anne Zeman and Kate Kelly; Everything You Need To Know About English Homework; Scholastic printing, New York, NY; August 1995